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Hedar 1 to Hedar 30	Nov. 10 to Dec. 9	ripening of later cereal grains; sunny, occasional hazy mists.	harvest of cereal grains, esp. early "ayiff" for bread; "mig" and "talbo" oilseeds. Teamwork in harvest and hut construction; boys take cattle from sun-scorched upland to green valleys.	12th Hedar: "Mikael" Feast, with picnics, in other localities. Hidar: 6th "Qwaqwam"-clergy ends 40-day fast. Local: 21st "Hisa" Festival at Aksum; Nemo' holiday.	Flirting season (esp. of adolescents) begins on "Mikael": fresh togas, beautification; tattooing (esp. adult divorcé women). Xist: Church student holiday.	
Tahsas 1 to Tahsas 30	Dec. 10 to Jan. 8	Summer ("balg"), hot, sunny, occasional light rains. Red aloes on rocks and thorny plants dominate scrubbed landscape. Rivers become brooks, brooks go dry.	Finish main harvests. Peasants take "ayiff" etc. to market in towns. Seeding of "summer barley" on irrigated fields. Traders organize caravans: produce and hides for salt and imports, coffee etc., cattle pastured in valleys.	19th Tahsas: "Gabriel" Feast-(because he came to Mary announcing Jesus' coming), esp. at Gulubi near Dire Dawa. 29th Tahsas: Christmas ("Lidet", or "Gena"), with all-night church services and special chants.	19th-29 is traditional hockey ("Gena") season, with climax on Christmas. Judges begin riding their circuit to hear litigations (land tenure, damages, etc.).	19th: Emp. Haile Selassi travels to Gulubi(for "Gabriel"). 29th: Emperor receives students, in traditional togs and jodpurs.
Ter 1 to Ter 30	Jan. 9 to Feb. 7	Height of dry summer ("bilg"). Some sluggish rivers considered poisonous for cattle.	Harvest irrigated garden crops: peas (shembera), plant (gwalo) (cabbage). Sell produce for taxes, and to buy salt, hot peppers, coffee.	Holy month: 11th Ter is "Temqit"(Epiphany), holiest day of year: processions to specially erected pool, with secred "tabot"(tablet), blessing of water for the coming light rains. 6th: "Geerá"(Circumcision of Jesus). 19th: "Giyorgis" (St. George) Xist: "Astéryo Maryam" (Mary)	Tax-gatherers collect for govt. for landlords, rent and gifts for the church. On the 11th (Epiphany), young men perform horse tournament("gugs") women are coiffured, henna-reddened palms. Climax of flirting.	secondary school in Addis Ababa.	On Epiphany, Jan. 19th Pentecost (11th Ter), ("mayték") among Falashas as harvest festival. 12th Monday Emperor H.S. receives foreign diplomats in fest. 12th traditional costume.

632
622 land. When a person is asked where he is from, he will often give the local name for his "and debber agar" of origin.

634 The cheqa shum, village headmen, are supervised by the district chief, "worāda shum", who is also appointed by the
625 governor. The district chief in turn appoints his own police, called "nāch lābash" (lit. "thiefcathers in white"), who wear no special uniforms, merely the usual white togas, and carry rifles, in the use of which they are expert. They are used not only against petty thieves but against more dangerous bandits also. Their efficiency is commonly regarded as far superior to that of the uniformed urban police. Usually there is one nāch lābash per half-district ("makatl worāda") or two per district, unless an increase in banditry ("shifta") requires more.

●651 Taxes, paid often in produce but increasingly in cash, are collected from each cheqa shum, but not by the district chief himself. For this task the governor has appointed a lieutenant, "mislanē", per district ("worāda"), who ranks equal with the worāda shum and expects aid from the latter. Usually the mislanē is a stranger to the district and himself a sort of glorified retainer and account-keeper from the court of the governor of the sub-province ("awraja") who has appointed him; while the district chief is a local man who may conspire with his village headmen to keep local prosperity from the knowledge of the governor's central office. The latter therefore has to rely on the cleverness of his lieutenants, the "mislanē".

622
631 The administrative pyramid rests squarely on the shoulders of the cheqa shum. He collects local dues for

622 both the central government and the local church. Where
651 the land has not been officially measured, which is the usual case in old Amhara territory, the mialane must rely on him for information necessary to the assessment of taxes. The cheqa shum is expected also to supervise customs evasion
622 when caravans or smugglers move through his territory. He
692 mediates between landlord and tenant in their endless little disagreement. In fact, his activities resemble those of an Elizabethan "Justice of the Peace".

He decides local disputes, in civil cases; officiates at the most common type of marriage, the "semanya" (an agreement between two kinship groups); he reads out government proclamations and decrees of the emperor at the nearest rural market place, including the call to arms in case of war. He can also indict a criminal and bring him before the "danya" the judge of the nearest market town, or to the "judges on circuit" accompanying the governor on his annual inspec-
622 tion tour during the dry season. Usually the cheqa shum is a local landlord himself, unless he has been given the post as a special favor for services rendered to the governor.

[701] Until the diminution of feudal privileges during the past decade, the cheqa shum was also responsible for providing the military-feudal chiefs and their troops with provisions when they were on march, making it unnecessary for
[485] them to depend on supply lines. Now that army troops receive regular salaries, he still has to play host to travelling officials for their personal needs, since there are no rural hotels. They do not pay him except by promises of future favors.

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622 485 This change has also lightened the burden on the "gabbar", the tenant sharecropper. In the past it was the gabbar who had to supply the "feast" (called "gebber", with ironic truthfulness regarding the provider) for feudal troops on march, in addition to all his other burdens. The cheqa shum was responsible for its collection, for only he knew how much produce, goats, sheep, honey, etc., the peasant had left after the heavy sharecropping rent to the landlord and the "tithe" ("asrat") which is still ppayable to the central government (formerly to the district feudal lord).

651 There is now a new tax, the "education tax" payable even in rural areas where no government schools exist as yet, and payable in cash only, not in produce as in case of "asrat". This tax, too, is collected by the cheqa shum and delivered to the mislenē who must now issue a receipt and forward the money to the central treasury.

563 361 Ethnic considerations in the location of a hamlet in Amhara territory apply to hamlets of scattered Falashas, ironsmiths who observe Mosaic Judaism, and hamlets of the Fagi, Cushitic-speaking tanners who were "Pagan" but have recently accepted the Coptic faith and the Amharic language. Since their services are required, they are often permitted to rent land on a hill, the other side of which may contain a Coptic Amhara hamlet. Relations between these hamlets, beginning on strictly economic terms, often become as friendly as the difference between religions, low status of skilled smiths and tanners, and old supernatural [622] suspicions permit. In case of such residence, one cheqa shum may have an ethnic variety of hamlets under his domain, and may know far more about their "strange" inhabitants and their customs than the average Amhara.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

443 or green ones for "alecha" meat sauce; tyeff grain; imported and native spices; linseed and nug oil seeds; firewood; chickens; donkeys and sheep and goats, but no more expensive livestock. Approaching feasts, fasts and rainy season change the emphasis and variety of products and activities.

438 The big Saturday market emphasizes items of long-distance trade such as salt, from the lowland plain of Areho, in Danakil, bordering on French Somaliland. Bricks of this coarse-grained salt "Amolye" were formerly used as money, their value increasing with the distance from the place of origin. This has been gradually discontinued during the reign of the present Emperor, and salt is now also imported in crushed pebbles from the Sudan, called "Senar" after the area of origin. The big bar has become rare, is called "lemadäw", and costs from Eth$4.- for a big one to Eth 50¢ for a little one.

438 Coffee comes from Jimma. Raw cotton is sold by
439 weight, from the Matamma border of the Sudan, brought on camel back. Spices (e.g. abusda) and incense come from as far as Yemen. Razor blades come from England. Imports from the Sudan include much cotton cloth: "abujedid" for shirt-making, more expensive cotton "stock" material, and now also khaki cloth for shorts and modern bush jackets.

439 Import duty is high, as much as Eth$9.- per "ta-
[65] qa", about 45 meters. Some raw cotton is domestic, from the Setit market of the Wolkait jungle border. "Taqa"

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435 tyeff in Gondar brings as little as Eth$10.- but in Addis Ababa Eth$30.- and more. Nug seed bring as much as Eth$30. per 100 kilos even at the Gondar market, a rural production area. Gesho, hops, brings as much as Eth$1.- per kilo; some semi-urban farmers grow it as a parttime cash crop (also the drug plant "chat" chewed by Muslims). Other products sold by the farmer include honey, peas, beans, maize, sorghum, dagussa, spices, beeswax, chickens brought by farm women, and recently also eggs; milk, butter, livestock big and small, goat-gut ("jamat") for cordage and the "qrar" banjo. Big livestock (cows, oxen and mules) are traded only at big Saturday markets, also the fat-tailed sheep or old cow for the Sunday dinner. At the end of long fasts edible livestock is in much demand and prices may double. It is also noteworthy that despite the poor roads, modern truck transportation is so efficient economically in comparison with traditional caravans, that prices for comparable imported and long-distance domestic products are on the same scale as the big Saturday markets.

443 [492] The big market is also an important governmental administrative center, especially the judicial organization. From ancient times this has been the location of the formally appointed judge, the "dayna", to arbitrate disputes that the curbstone judge has not settled, and to hear cases against accused thieves. Here the governor's trade chief, the "nägad-ras", acts as collector of revenue and supervisor of trade practices. He fixes and alters tolls on trails and river crossings,

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and observes the travelling traders, the "mängadänna". Both chiefs, especially the danya, sit under broad, shady trees on the market. Nearby is the gibbet, from which criminals were publicly hung until less than a decade ago. Recent additions to the market scene include a few modern tables and chairs at which treasury clerks from Addis Ababa receive import and other duties; and, within a barbed wire fence, government "dressers" of the health department from time to time, especially in epidemics, give free typhus and other injections to anyone applying and diagnosed sick.

Trade practices of the Amhara differ from much of the Middle East, especially from the Arab. The Amhara is too proud to badger a customer, and the profit motive is not as storng--he is not concerned with financial gain. The Amhara is not concerned at monetary loss in a trade transaction but his temper is aroused if he fears that he has been bettered, outwitted and made the laughing stock of others. If he has sold to a foreigner at only a little above the usual price instead of double or triple, his competitors at the market will jeer at him. In this case he will try to undo the trade, claiming linguistic misunderstanding.

As a result of this fear of being shamed, producers of native articles will not bring manufactured goods to market unless they have a previous firm order, after which the customer has to wait. It is craftsman's trade rather than commercial. This is even true of members of ethnic low-class producers, tanners, saddlemakers, smiths,

423 He could do with "mād-bēt" lands as he pleased, without
656 interference from kin groups, the church, or other local-feudal dynasties.

654 Thus the present emperor, when he was still merely
656 regent, and a young man in his twenties, began his pro-
423 gram of modernization and centralization in his own "mad-bet" in Harar province. He organized the coffee-growing of that area as a cash crop for export, and, more significantly, reduced the burdens on the "gabbar", improved security of tenure, appointed supervisors to see that matters would not slip back, and instructed them to report to him as the central power. He also set up elementary schools in several locations. At regular intervals he toured his lands personally. As a result, "gabbar" from neighboring feudal estates were eager to have the protection of his "mād-bēt".

423 These efforts were a departure from the traditional
656 pattern of high feudal nobles on their "mād-bēt" (though, on the other hand, no one could criticize him for doing as he pleased on his own "household land"). The others appointed trustees, "tāwālaj", usually 12, to administer their land, while they remained absentee landlords at the court of the "king of kings". These trustees were u usually appointed from patriarchal elders and lowest nobility, and were responsible for the support of the parish churches of their area, with priest, deacons, dābtāra (scribe-choristers), etc.

423 In the traditional pattern there was another means
● 651 of exercising some central control, through the collection

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423 651 of land taxes and tithe, provided these were not entirely claimed by powerful local feudal nobility or the church. These tax-collectors, who often lived dangerously, were given land as reward for services; this land was called "mälkäña" land. They also acted as overseers of statute-labor, "hudäd". They were usually free from both land tax and tithe on their own territory, and, although their sons could inherit the job and the land that went with it, their security of tenure was even weaker than that of the "gultenña". Partly this was due to the ever-shifting power factors, for, when the central power was weak or distracted by a distant war, the tax-collector might find himself working as a provincial functionary, intermediate between the cheqa shum (headman) and the provincial feudal lords.

423 656 When central power was greatly strengthened in the days of Menelik II, there was a considerable increase in "malkana" lands. This was particularly the case in lands he had conquered from the Galla landlords ("balbat"). He expropriated 3/4 of their lands for distribution among his military veterans, but in consolation granted the balbats the remaining 1/4 as "mälkäña" land. This freed them from taxes, enabled them to pass their remaining landholdings on to their sons, and turned them into loyal subjects of the central power which alone could protect their tenure from future expropriation. The outcome of this amazingly Solomonic solution of an age-old problem of land tenure in a feudal country has turned the Galla balbats today into the most reliable

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423
658 supporters of the central government.

The descendants of these balbats, now educated in
423 the high schools of Addis Ababa, are being sent into even
647 the old-Amhara provinces at present, by Emperor Haile
651 Selassie, to act as salaried collectors for the central treasury ("Gemja-Bet") (so that the function of the former malkana has again come full circle, though the term is no longer used for the office). In fact, the new centralized tax-gathering has ended the office of the old, provincial "mälkäña", and they, much like the "gultäñña", can only hope to have their lands affirmed as "rest". This they can hope to achieve only if they work the lands themselves and pay tithe on produce, otherwise it may be lost to squatters. Their final security of tenure, by contract instead of vague status (they have lost the latter), will come only when the lands are measured and modern titles issued, which has not yet happened in the old-Amhara areas that resist this. The non-resistant Galla balbats of Shoa province are thus more secure in tenure, and will remain so as long as the central govern- is strong.

423 Measurement of land is called, traditionally, "throw-
804 ing the rope" ("yase gämäd"). This rope may be made of cordage, plant fibers, traditionally 40 elbow lengths long. In northern districts it is sometimes made of plaited oxhide, and called "qälad".

423 The "rope was thrown" widely in Galla lands conquered by Menelik II. Three-quarters of these lands were then divided into gashas of 80-100 acres each, and

1423 the peasants occupying them were allocated as "gabbar" to soldiers and officers. A soldier-veteran who had family might have received 2 to 5 families "gabbar"; officers 7 to 10, district commanders 30 and more "gabbar" families, governors hundreds of gabbar. From the gabbar's point of view, this constituted little change in his lot, for he had served the Galla balbat in similar ways. Gabbar were also allocated to the Coptic churches built on the new territories. Menelik II regarded these new parishes and buildings as permanent outposts of Amhara society in the Galla south.

1423
• 651 The first emperor to strengthen central power, in modern times, and to begin land reforms, was Emperor Theodore. In the 1850's and 1860's he instituted a new office, still retained. This was the appointment of trusted lieutenants, "mislanē", to act as tax-collectors, in place of the uncertain "malkana" who were always being subdued by regional feudal powers. He appointed as "mislanē" persons from different regions, who would own no fealty to local lords, and could be relied upon to owe personal loyalty directly to the central power that had appointed them. This was the first type of officer not rewarded by land grants, but receiving salary out of the taxes he had collected. At present, a century later, the office of "mislanē" is little changed, except that he is now directly responsible to the provincial governor who is himself an appointee of the Emperor and who is frequently shifted to another province to prevent him from growing local roots.

423 The richest farmer in the rural vicinity of Gondar,
427 a member of the Qemant (Cushitic-speaking) ethnic group, owns 8 gasha (about 400 acres), which is considered fabulous wealth by his Amhara neighbors. However, with the aid of his sons and servants, he cultivates only one gasha at any given time. He parcels out the remaining 7 gasha, except for some fallow land, to landless tenant farmers, many of them ex-slaves, usually in plots no bigger than 10 qada (about 4 acres), which is considered the limit one man can plow and seed without help. The rent they pay him consists of one "madiga " of tyeff grain (about 25 kilo); payable by each. Each also pays him 1/2 madiga of barley, referred to as "qolo", tribute to his "household". His agents also collect the 10% tithe, in produce, which he is expected to pass on to the government, and the new Eth$4.- education tax. He invest part of his profits in cows for his increasing herds.

423 For purposes of taxation, of peasants, the govern-
651 ment treasury must rely on the judgment of the headman, ("cheqa shum"), who is difficult to check because the land is unmeasured and a "gasha" is a flexible concept. Therefore, his supervisor, usually the mislane, can only base a check on past, customary payments.

[602] Taxcollectors are known to be generous when deal-
423 ing with even distant kinfolk, or with priests and
651 their relatives, and to even out the receipts by pres-
653 sure on low-class ethnic minorities, justifying this by claiming that the ethnics have unstated income prom their handicrafts.

423 by claiming that the ethnics have unstated income
651 from their handicrafts. Among the methods of this
563 extortion is the "initiation fee" of as much as Eth$3.- per qada, when freshly cleared from the bush. Another impressment consists of "voluntary" supplies regularly paid to the Coptic parish church in the locality, by non-Coptic ethnics. Also, the feudal landlord usually asks them for a special "pasturage fee"--as much as Eth$2.- per qada of fallow land--with the further condition that no more than two oxen (or cows) graze on each qada. Where a Coptic farmer may pay perhaps Eth$10.- tithe on his semi-fertile 50 qada, the non-Coptic farmer may be made to pay double to four times that for similar produce on an equivalent plot of land. While
[871] the new education tax is the same, the non-Coptic artisan finds it very difficult to enroll his boy in the overcrowded elementary school in the provincial capital.

423 The average "rest"-owning farmer working 10 qada
651 every year, may harvest about 50 madiga of tyeff grain,
511 selling it for Eth$150.-(In the rainy season it would bring twice that); plus 30 madiga barley, Eth$60.- plus some honey, if he has it.

If the tax-collector is his friend, his tithe may amount to as little as Eth$5 to 10, his education tax Eth$2 to 4. His land tax based on the rate of 1927 will be very low, and his pasturage, as Coptic non-artisan, free.

511 Thus he has enough for his basic needs including the purchase of a new toga (shamma) per year, and perhaps a new donkey. However, he cannot normally afford

423 Code of 1930 of the central government. "Rest" land was protected by a provision that it could not be sold without permission of the district judge. This assured that the transaction would be public, enabling the kinfolk to protest. In the provinces of Begemdir, Semyen and Gojjam, where land was considered plentiful, most land consisted of freehold "rest", which remained unsurveyed, and in practice virtually unsaleable. In Shoa province, much land formerly held by veterans and officials ("gultennas") has reverted to the government. But most "gabbar" tenants still owe the 2/3 of produce previously paid. The tenants of the descendants of "gultennas" can become owners only by purchasing the land; meanwhile their income goes to pay the rent, the tithe, etc., leaving no capital to accumulate.

423 651 Under this Code the church was still exempt from land tax on its huge holdings. The laws of 1944 abrogated this exemption, but the amendment of 1947 partially restored the right of the church to claim "voluntary contributions" locally, from recipients of benefits such as education. The law of 1944 was a victory for the resisting provincial Amhara peasants, in that it limited, temporarily, the land taxes of Begemdir, Semyen and Gojjam (also the Coptic province of Tigre) to the low rate of 1927. The tithe could continue to be on an "estimated" basis. All taxes permitted "scaling" according to fertility.

Thus the old immunities and inequalities in

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423 [651] taxation of landholdings have been only partially swept away. Enforcement in the old-Amhara provinces is lax. The "gabbar" system, abolished by decree after the emperor's return in 1941, continues as the broad basis of land occupancy, and as a major pillar of social structure, with only little, gradual change.

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632 not far from the market. A smaller daily market for retail items would develop, so commerce proceeded even on a daily basis. A larger church school, to include some higher grades, would be set up by priests and Däbtära (scribe-choristers).

632 712 On account of the floods in the rainy season, most of this town would be on a higher level, preferably a butte overlooking a river valley from which drinking water could be brought every day. On this fertile flood plain, just below the town, there would be some grass even at the gheight of the dry season, so that the cows owned by urban citizens would always find some pasture.

423 On this floodplain a "commons" was set aside, which no 425 one could "enclose" for private use. It was called "addäbabay" or even "yähezb addäbabay", and served as camping place for caravans, for temporary storage space of their goods and their mules, donkeys or camels, prior to the slow climb up the butte to the Saturday market. This arrangement also had the advantage of military security for the town, protecting it from sneak attack of an enemy under guise of a caravan, which was not permitted to proceed upward into town until dawn. For the Amhara town, unlike the Muslim towns in the south, were not walled.

632 651 This arrangement also permitted the "nägadraa," the collector of duties for the central power of the province, to keep control of the merchandise entering and leaving the market.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

E. Administration and Tax Structure in Transition.

65 Imposition of tributes and taxes is the traditional yardstick by which the central power of Middle Eastern as well as African rulers has been measured, in their eyes and those of their subjects! On the basis of this yardstick the old Abyssinian rulers, even including the mighty Menelik II, enjoyed very little permanent central power, and their administrative decrees rarely outlasted their individual careers.

Repeated attempts have been made by the present ruler of Ethiopia to establish some uniform tax structure, replacing old feudal tributes. Some progress has been painfully made, but it seems that this particular phase of administration will long remain among the most change-resistent. Much of the tax system and enforcement can be described as chaotic, and this is particularly true in the proud, old Amhara provinces.

The first attempt of the central government to impose a direct tax on the individual citizen occurred in 1934, requiring every adult to pay a minimum of Eth$1.- per year, with income taxes as high as 20% on all cash salaries and feudal dues. The tax was highly unpopular, and hardly enforced. After return from exile, when his power was greater, the emperor resolved to take the administration of tax-collecting out of the hands of the provincial governors and to entrust the task to officials of the central Ministry of Finance. Collection houses of the central treasury, "gemja byet" were set up in

65 modern structures abandoned by the Italians in provincial capitals, were carefully guarded by military police, and placed in charge of treasury clerks from Addis Ababa who had a modern high school education. This form of administration continues at present.

The attempt was made by the central government, at about the same time (1942/1943) to set up a system for the land tax, based on fertility, which, it was hoped, would be more acceptable to the traditional-minded rural population. This tax was Eth$15.-for "lämm"(fat, i.e., fertile); Eth$10.-for semifertile ("Lämm tyeff"), and Eth$5.- for relatively poor but still usable agricultural land ("tyeff"); per "gasha" (80-100 acres). But the old-Amhara provinces resisted the measurement of their lands for this purpose, and in 1944 the amended decree permitted a different, lower,(older) rate of taxation, both in land tax and in produce tax ("asrat"), to apply to the old-Amhara provinces. Even this, however, is only partially enforced, snce it is difficult to collect from the more remote, mountainous, rural districts where the feudal kin groups and local churches jealously guard their old vested interests. Moreover, the"Galla"clerks sent from Addis Ababa rarely dare to go far beyond the provincial capitals, leaving rural collections to the old "mislane",

As a result, the tax structure in the old-Amhara provinces is a medley of the old and the new, often in accordance with the distance from the provincial capital, Land rents and tithes still pass into and through

● 651 the hands of the feudal landlords, mostly in produce, though the new Education Tax is paid in cash. The sales tax on horses, mules, donkeys and cattle, collected at the big markets by the old "nägadras" is now supposed to be accumulated at the "gemja bet" of the provincial capital, to be forwarded to Addis Ababa once every month, sometimes after deduction of expenses incurred locally by the central government. The same procedure is followed with income taxes, which, in a provincial capital such as Gondar, are stated officially as averaging Eth$1.50 per taxpayer per year.

651 441 [494] The highest local income tax is paid by the local branch of the widespread trading company of Besse Co., which has a monopoly on gasoline sales, and does trucking, imports and exports from the provinces, and which pays Eth$750.-per annum in Gondar, a very small percentage of its actual income. [505] The next-highest local taxpayer is Navigatana Co, formerly of Italian origin, which controls the diesel boats which monopolize modern traffic across Lake Tana. [494] The third-highest local taxpayer is an Arab wholesale merchant, who operates at irregular intervals in import, export, and trucking, westward to the Sudan and eastward to Eritrea, on the Italian-built roads.

651 But in the strictly rural, agricultural environment, tributes and taxes are still measured per "madiga" (lit. potful) of tyeff grain, received by the feudal landlord ("balbat") or landowning local church. The amounts are largely determined by local custom and tra-

651 dition; with fertility of soil, size of plot, size of harvest in a given year, constituting merely secondary considerations. For the tribute is regarded as payment 651 427 also for the right to squat on the land, to gather dead-wood and cowdung for fuel, wood and nature-grown fibers for utensils, pasture cattle and donkeys, build a hut, use the water in the brook. Consequently, a greedy landlord parcels out his land in smallest possible plots, to receive as much profit as possible, and he is aided and abetted in this by the poor tenants who are so jealous of each other that they complain if their neighboring tenant has been granted more land than he can farm without servants. The tribute for such a minimum plot to the landlord thus takes the form of a "quitrent" (now that the statute-labor has been abrogated officially, though not always actually):

1 madiga of grain (usually tyeff), referred to as "amsho"

plus 1/2 madiga of "qolo" (usually barley, for roasted condiments or beer-making).

651 439 Only in export duties and import tariffs does the central government have full control. Export taxes, ranging usually from 28 - 30% on coffee, the major valuable export, are levied and collected by the Ministry of Finance. This product comes from the southwest, Jimma sub-province, or Harar, in the southeast, both areas conquered by Menelik II from the Galla, and therefore under more unchallenged central administration.

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651 Import duties are collected on the relatively limited
439 routes of access to the country, e.g. on cotton sheeting, and on modern "luxury" items imported for Europeans in Addis Ababa.

202 Communications were recognized by both Emperor Menelik II and Haile Selassie I as one of the foremost bottlenecks. At the turn of the present century and in some areas even later, messages and orders from and to provincial administrators were still carried by the traditional runner on horseback, carrying the message wedged in the top of a cleft stick, which assured safe con-
206 duct even through valleys dominated by bandits. Menelik II introduced telegraph and telephone service at least to the major provincial capitals, and this has been improved since, though the rural district headquarters often still are without either form of modern communication, not to speak of the rural hinterland.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

796 857 [589]

from the bin of peas
fill me up."

Thereupon the householder gives them a handful of shembera peas, which they roast to "qolo", and this symbol, too, is considered to invite a good crop.

796 805 The 5th or last day of Pagumēn is the annual feast day of St. John. The "tabot" from his church is carried to water very early in the morning, and the men bathe in the river. The old year is symbolically buried, in some regions, by ceremonial burial of the book "Lefafa Ṭsedeq" (Scroll of Righteousness) which resembles in part the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. The day is traditionally [51] also the end of the fiscal budget year, on which the nagadras, the appointee over commerce, had to pay the feudal tribute to his lord (at least a large jar of beer and 20 enjara breads) in addition to squaring his accounts.

That evening torches are lit, for this is the beginning of a new year.

c) The Religious Life Cycle of the Key Individual.

852 Baptism usually occurs after 40 days for boys, still later for girl babies, sometimes as long as 80 days. This practice is based on Old Testament patterns, and more directly, on the period of 40 days that the Virgin Mary herself had to segregate herself from the Temple after the birth of Jesus. (The Falasha Jews of Abyssinia is concerned less that a baby might die

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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231 a Christian, because the cows that they keep belong to
563 Christian gentlemen of the country of the Barnagais. These Moors have nothing else for their labour than the milk and butter which they get from the cows, and with this they maintain themselves and their wives and children. On some occasions it happened to us to sleep near these Arabs, they accosted us to ask if we wished to buy cows, and for the price allowed us to choose them. They say that these
[984] Moors, and headmen who go with them, are all robbers under the favour of the lords to whom the cows belong, and so only large caravans travel. The revenues of this
792 monastery are very large; those which I saw and heard of
631 are, chiefly, this mountain in which the monastery is situated,
361 of an extent of ten leagues, in which they sow much millet,
[243] barley, rye, and all these pay dues to the monastery, and they are also paid on the herds. On the skirts of this mountain there are many large villages, and most of them belong to the monastery, and at a distance of one or two days' journey an infinite number of places belonging to the monastery, and are called *Gultus* of the monastery, which means *coutos* or *celeiros*,[1] according to our Portugal. Don Rodrigro the ambassador and I were going on the road to the Court, a good five days' journey from this monastery, and arriving at a town which is named *Oaina* we kept Saturday and Sunday in a small village which might contain twenty people, and they told us they belonged to the monastery of Bisan. Besides that town there were a hundred villages all belonging to the monastery, and that in which we halted was one of them. We were also shown
651 many of the others, and they told us that every three years
631 they paid a horse to the monastery, and that each village
792 did this, which makes thirty-three horses every year. And in order to be certain of this I went to ask it of the *Alicaxi* of the monastery, which means the auditor or major-domo,

[1] *Couto*, an asylum, an enclosure; *celeiro*, a granary.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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because he receives, and does justice: he told me that it was true that they paid the said horses. I asked why the monastery wanted so many horses, since they did not ride on them. He told me that they were obliged to pay horses, but that they did not give him horses, but paid fifty cows for each horse, and that this due of horses was so because these were villages of the King which paid him this due, and as he had endowed the monastery with these villages, between the monastery and the villagers this due of horses had been transmuted into cows. And over and above these dues of cows they also pay dues on fruits. Besides, at fifteen days' journey from the monastery, in the kingdom of Tigre mahom, there is a very large town belonging to the monastery named Aadete, which may be a large dukedom. This pays every year sixty horses, and an infinite number of dues and customs. In this district there are always more than a thousand friars of the monastery, because there are many churches in it, and the monastery is much favoured there. Of these friars some are very good, honourable, and devout, and others are not such. Besides these dues of horses paid to this monastery and to others, there are many villages belonging to the King which pay dues of the said horses, because this is always his due, and there are villages neighbouring to Egypt in which are large and good horses, and others near Arabia in which they are very good, but not so much so as those of Egypt.

CAP. XVI.—*How the friars impeded our departure, and of what happened to us on the road.*

Returning therefore to our journey; whilst we were still at the monastery of St. Michael there arrived the man sent by the Barnagais to take us away, and with him two of our Portuguese, on the fourth day of the month of June; and he

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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643 701 631 he had, since he was Arraz of the Chanfas, that is, head or captain of the men at arms, was to go about like a man at arms. In the fashion that he went, there followed behind him twenty or thirty men with spears and bucklers, so that he goes about the court like a provost with his men. I knew another Arraz Tagale, and Arraz Jacob, lords of large lands, and many other Xuums, lords of lands, but without titles. Thus the Barnagais is the lord of many 643 631 lords, and of many lands and people, and so he and all 651 these lords that have been mentioned are subject to the 439 Prester John, and he removes and appoints them as he pleases: so they pay to him large dues. As all these lords and their lordships are on the side of Egypt and Arabia, from whence come the good horses, and the brocades and the silks, they pay in these same goods: that is to say, horses, brocades, and other silks. They come to the Barnagais with all these dues, and the Barnagais to Prester John, and pays for himself and for the others, in each year, a hundred and fifty horses; as to the brocades and silks, it cannot be known how much they amount to, only I heard say that they were many; I also heard that they pay a large sum of cotton cloths from India for the customs which they levy in the port of Arquiquo.

CAP. XXV.—*Of their method of guarding their herds from wild beasts, and how there are two winters in this country: and of two churches that are in the town of Barua.*

[621] 291 The settlement of this town of Barua and of those adjoining it, is this. There are ten, twelve, or fifteen houses, and one walled and closed yard, served by a gate: in this yard they shut up their domestic cows which they use for their milk and butter, and also small flocks, and mules and asses. They keep the gate well fastened, and a great fire,

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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317 one ounce to ten of gold, which gives it a very pale colour.

703 N. B. This observation is sufficiently confirmed by the colour of those links that still remain of the honorary gold chain conferred on Mr Bruce by the king of Abyssinia. These links are of a paler hue than a common guinea, rather coarsely made, and unpolished. Gold chains, called in Habbesh sunsulé, are a mark of dignity bestowed by the sovereign on the most meritorious persons in his army. It is usual to give a splendid suit of clothes at the same time, an Egyptian and Persian custom; vide Genesis, xli. 42. and Esther, viii. 15.

●651 Wechne, in Belessen, is about 34 or 35 miles, a long day's journey from Emfras. There is paid, to maintain the royal family on the mountain, 250 ounces gold, and 730 cloths (this means webs of cotton cloth, called shuma). This is an old establishment. None are permitted to go up but the women carrying water. There was formerly a cistern, but it is now in ruins, and useless. There are near 300 persons there; and all the exiles are allowed to marry. Bacuffa escaped by help of his sister.

793 Extreme unction is unknown in Abyssinia; that is, the
792 anointing with oil. However, when a person is attacked with sickness, which threatens death, he often puts on a monk's hood, as a token that, in case of recovery, he will abandon the world, and then receives the last sacrament, or rather he does so before putting it on; and it is generally the custom to distribute all his moveables to the churches, which the priests appropriate. These are traces of extreme unction. The great men ofen renounce the hood, and return to their former life.

792 N. B. The Abyssinian MS. histories are full of these instances, in which the great men, when disappointed in politics, retire to Waldubba, or other deserts, to live as monks. The distribution of goods and money made by the kings, when sick, to the churches, occurs in almost every reign. Before Yasous II. died, the Chronicle says, that he had given away every thing he had, in this way, except the crown on his head. When Joas was proclaimed, the Iteghe his grandmother wished to give a present to the poor, as usual at the begin-

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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101 and these Toluma come down to the Nile, and divide Walka and Shoa from the Nile.

651 Agow-midre pays yearly to the king in all about 1000 ounces of gold; and 1000 dabras of honey, each dabra about 60 rotol. It pays also about 1000 or 1500 cattle. Ancasha, Azena, Quaquera, and Banja, pay their quota in honey; Banja, gold; Metchakel, Ayamico's country, gold; Zigam, gold, no honey. Danguiah, Dengla, and Saccala, all are called Ancasha. Dengla pays chiefly cattle, and a large kind of sheep called Macoot. Butter is no part of the meery, but is brought as a present on paying the meery. After passing the Kelti, on the right, by the Bronti, is Atchefer, after that Quaquera, then Dengla, then Banja, then Metchakel. Temhua belongs to the Ras, and the revenue is paid to him. The first heavy stroke the Agow received of late years was Waragna, father of this Fasil, bringing Galla from beyond the Abay, and wasting their country entirely. He burnt the houses and churches, and led away captive the women and children. Under the mild government of Casmati Eshte they began to revive, but now again under Fasil they are very low.

361 Metchakel is one long day's journey, I suppose 36 miles, from Boori (Bure); it is inhabited by Galla Djawi. After these are the Basso Gallo; and the Gooderoo Galla of Kasmati Boro. His place is called Hadis Amba. These border on Gojam, Damot, and Metchakel. Gafat is not one continued country, but villages here and there. Wumbarma is Gafat. Metchakel is, however, a much more considerable country. Beyond the Nile, west of Bure, the country for a considerable distance is dry, deserted, and uninhabited, the Galla living further into the territory. All the banks are there high, steep, and unwholesome, and full of trees. These Galla are Amoro Jidda. Guesgue belongs to the Iteghe, has a nagareet, and gives the title of Kasmati. It pays 1000 cloths, 50 oxen, and 100 wakeet.

The caravans of Egypt used to go from Aidab, or Gaidab, to Dahalac, in their way to Yemen, or Jidda, the port of Mecca. Souakin is seven days south of Gaidab.

101 563 The Galla, west of the Abay, say, that they are descended of a Gin or devil, and a woman of the tribe of Koreish. They are always at war with the Nareans, Abyssinians, or

[p.58]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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rains of Naasse and Hamlie, it never overflows at the springs, nor do the fountains seem larger. He remembered the accession of Hatze Yasous to the throne, and was about 80 years old. The east side of the Nile is less barren than the west side. Aformasha is not barren. 361

Singular custom. The Betwudet (in Habesh), upon the death of any Wiziro, is obliged to pay the expences of the ceremony, called Misle, which amounts to 100 oxen, 3000 loaves of wheat bread, 20 jars hydromel, wood, &c. the whole about 60 ounces of gold. The ceremony is this: A sort of figure, resembling the defunct, is placed upon horseback, in his usual dress, and so carried in procession about the outer court of the palace, with the royal standard (sendick) carried before it, and the nagareet beating. This is called, in this country, "burying with sendick and nagareet;" for which the Betwudet has 1200 ardeb of wheat yearly out of the Attekolla. 651 766

The route of the Islam merchants, S. is by two ways, with loaden asses, 8 or 9 miles per day. The way by Gojam is performed in 30 days to Sebou, and thence for other 10 to Narea. The Kibby, or Zebee, rises in Narea. Coffee, of different kinds, grows there in abundance, and the Galla feed on it. They use the lex talionis, but their internal justice is strict. They are very scrupulous of oaths: Wauke Laftan, by heaven and earth, is one of the most solemn. There are three races of Galla, the Guangoul in Angot, north-east of Begemder; Mahomet Ali, another farther west than the Guangoul, towards Amhara; and a third, Mahomet, brother of Lubo, west of Amhara. The rest are pagans; but when converted are said to be better Christians than the native Abyssinians. 487

Mahabar Selasse is four commodious days journey from Gondar, in the line of Tchemmera and Tenkel. Near it pass the rivers Shimfa and Gandova, the last of which has several very high cataracts; it joins to the Shankala, and is about two days journey from Tchemmera. Both rivers fall into the Nile. 133

The river Bashilo separates Amhara from Begemder; the Mashilla, a river of Gojam, and the river Nefasse, fall into the Nile at the same place. In the country of the Galla west of Damot, across or west of the Abay, there is little

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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133 water, and near the banks of the river the country is desert.

651 Damot pays 800 ounces (wakea) of gold; formerly 1000. Gojam 80 ounces, and 70 mules. Lasta 1000 ounces; these last years it pays no more, being at present annexed to Begemder. Tigre pays 400 ounces in salt and cotton cloths. Walcait 1500 ounces in cotton cloths.

131 The latitude of Adderghey is 13° 24′ 56″; of Macara, on
361 Lamalmon, 13° 6′ 8″; of Gondar, 12° 34′ 30″; of Emfras, 12° 12′ 38″; of the fountains, 10° 58′ 58″.

Note at Lobeia.—The Arabs are fond of music, especially
000 vocal; for they have no instruments but a kind of flute, of the size of a German flute, which gives a wild and not unmelodious sound, and the cymbal or drum, with ten pieces fixed to its sides, which is chiefly used in cadence in dancing, or for symphonies. Their vocal music, or songs, are upon first hearing disagreeable; but it rarely happens that one who has a good ear is not soon fond of them. They are all upon love; at least I never heard any that had war for their subject; some have religion, and are sung by their Shekhs, or saints. The former have effects upon their hearers nearly as extravagant as the ancient music produced. They have no music in parts, and have absolutely no idea of harmonical composition.

[pp. 81-end have not been processed for the files. - Analyst]

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by the Emperor and was his representative in the province. His exact title varied. He might rise to the height of that of *Negus*; he might be a ras. More frequently in recent years he held the next title in rank, that of *dejazmach*. He was the general of the provincial army, the judge and the administrator. He was paid no salary. He paid himself, his entourage, and his soldiers from the tribute of the province. On the pecuniary side, in addition to the tithes and other tribute, he collected the profits of justice and the tolls on the borders of his province. The tolls being collected from the merchants would be one of his few sources of cash, especially before this century.[1]

It has already been said that no estimate is possible of the proportion of tribute passed on by the governors to the Emperor. It seems probable, however, that where any tribute was paid the amount varied according to the arrangements made between the Emperor and the governor and probably also, from time to time, according to the needs and the power of the Emperor and the advisability of appeasing him with tribute. It is certain that large caravans taking rich gifts of cloth, horses, mules, and gold ceased long before this century to come in to the Emperor from any of the northern provinces.[2]

The governor, especially if he were a local grandee, was a very great man. The Ethiopians, like many other peoples, love the trappings of power. It was the ambition of most men to wear fine clothes and to have at least one or two slaves or servants to run beside the stirrup. The governors naturally aimed at reproducing as far as they could the style of the Emperor's palace. They lived at the highest level they could afford, each with a court of his own and a circle of officials of his own appointment, whose titles were current only in the province. When they gave out lands and offices to their followers they tried, like the Emperor, to prevent these becoming hereditary and aimed at unsettling their holders from time to time.[3] Ethiopians tended to gravitate round the households of a great man with its hospitality, its atmosphere of movement, of security and opportunity. The governor's headquarters would be crowded with supporters, suitors, the soldiers of his personal bodyguard, priests, musicians, jesters, servants, and slaves. Upon festivals he kept open house and like his Emperor gave great feasts of raw meat and mead. A description of the lavish hospitality of the Ras of Angote given in the sixteenth century[4] reads almost word for word the same as those of the entertainments described by other travellers 400 years later.

When a governor travelled, especially upon taking up or leaving his appointment, it was a serious affair for the country upon which he

[1] Rüppel, E., *Reise in Abessinien*, Frankfurt, 1838–40, vol. 2, p. 35.
[2] See above, pp. 191–3. [3] Hotten, pp. 145–6. [4] Alvarez, pp. 136–7.

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here there is no Domesday Book to give a clear point of departure and none of the successive unravellings of generations of scholars to help the inquirer. Any attempt at the simplification of the evidence must to some extent be a distortion.

Two preliminary generalizations may help to clarify the picture.

Firstly it is important to remember that in Ethiopia, as in all economically backward countries where industry is negligible, almost all material wealth was the direct produce of the herdsman or the man who worked on the land with his plough and his hoe.

Ethiopia shared with the rest of tropical Africa a primitive peasant agriculture; the difference was that there stood upon this basis a large hierarchical structure of government. This meant that the cultivator must, as the Ethiopians themselves express it, 'carry upon his shoulders' all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor; all his officials, central and provincial, great and small; the vast hierarchy of the church and the large armies of soldiers. As a result of the undeveloped economy and communications of Ethiopia, the services of the agriculturalist had for the most part to be used directly by the contribution of part of the crops or cattle from his own land or by the use of his labour upon that of another. While slave labour was widely used for domestic purposes, especially in the houses of the rich, it was not in the north used very extensively in the fields, and the main support of Ethiopian state and society was not the slave but the theoretically free cultivator, the *gabar*. The elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations represent only the different means by which his services and produce were utilized by the government and by other classes. It was not the land but the labour of the *gabars* on the land which provided the support for provincial as well as imperial administration. Hence the importance of the forms of tenure and tribute.

The word *gabar* has been used as a term of reproach against Ethiopia. At the end of these chapters on the provinces the reader will be in a better position to judge how far this charge was just, and especially how far it accumulated evil association by the forms it assumed in the conquered south. Here the position of the northern *gabar* must be defined in its simplest terms. In theory and, at its best, in practice, the status was not synonymous with slavery or even with oppression. Literally it means one who pays *gibr* or tribute. 'There is no shame in the word "gabbar"' was the general Ethiopian opinion recorded by an observant British consul.[1] As tribute was in theory based upon land

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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not the person, it has been said that high notables and the Emperor himself might, in strict technicality, be called *gabars*, since they might hold land burdened with some *gabar* service. Moreover—again in the theory—*gabars* were not, like the serf, tied to the soil; they could leave their land and seek a new holding elsewhere.

The position can be put in another way. The Ethiopian, like the Englishman, owed dues to the central government or to its representative; firstly, he owed the Emperor tribute and tithe for his land; secondly, he owed the equivalent of local rates, and, thirdly, when he was a tenant, he owed rent. The only difference, it might be said, was that the Ethiopian paid all these dues in grain, honey, firewood, stock, or labour instead of in money. The difference was, however, fundamental. In the absence of central control or uniformity and in situations where the *gabar*, the man who provided all this tribute in kind with his own hands, happened to be in a weak position, the form of payment opened the way to all kinds of extortion.

Mrs. Sandford, who with her husband ran a farm for many years in Galla country near the capital and was therefore in a position to provide very authoritative evidence upon this subject, gives the following account of the *gabars*, presumably those in her district. They owed the governor or soldiers to whom they were allotted both produce and services: these might be one day's labour out of three, eight or ten days; the provision of timber for building the master's house and grass for its thatching; firewood and one fifth of the grain crop in addition to the Emperor's tenth. This, she concludes, might have been reasonable especially if the *gabars* could have dared to use their right of appeal. 'But in fact the abuse proved stronger than the system.' The masters exacted more than their due 'and the system was in practice as extortionate as those of old Roman days. Officer and soldier were equally rapacious, . . .' The *gabar* dared not appeal. Coming from a witness of such experience and of such devotion to Ethiopia, this evidence carries weight.[1]

The tithe of grain was owed to the Emperor by every subject unless he were exempted on account of his other services to state or church. This grain was collected on the threshing floors and stored in the governor's official granaries; it was used mainly for the sustenance of the soldiers. Since such a bulky product could hardly be carried far in Ethiopia there was very little market in cereals. Pastoral tribes were expected to pay their tithe in stock. There was also a tribute of produce or labour, or both, which was nearly always taken by the governor or his representative and there were further dues or presents to the sub-

[1] Sandford, pp. 48–9.

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651 ordinate officials which varied from province to province. There were also the heavy dues of purveyance to passing officials, soldiers and even private travellers, whose records are full of evidence of the readiness with which through the centuries this burdensome obligation was accepted. Some of these dues were not easily to be distinguished from the further requirements in kind and in labour which a tenant might owe, in addition, as rent to a private landlord.

THE EMPEROR AND THE LAND

423 From the *gabar*, who formed the basis of the system of land tenure, we return to the Emperor at its apex. The conflict as to whether provincial office was held personally and terminally at the royal will was reproduced in the closely complementary question of the usage and ownership of land and its dues by which alone office could be supported. Here, in theory as well as in practice, the Emperor was less successful in maintaining his claims. It was true that land and office generally went together, but land-holding was wider than office-holding; it was more complex and it affected more people. Moreover, while office was highly desirable, the earth, meeting all necessities, was the main object and, once acquired, was held with the utmost tenacity.

423 643 The theory maintained by the Emperors was that they owned all the land in the country and that it was therefore all held at their will. 'He takes and gives all lands at pleasure' we read in Tellez.[1] 'The King's authority is so unlimited', wrote Lobo, 'that no Man can in this country be called with Justice Proprietor of anything, nor doth any Man when he Sows his Field know that he shall Reap it.'[2] Numerous authorities follow these early observers in this view. The assumption was that no land could be private property and therefore heritable. The most authoritative challenge to this theory was to be found in the ancient *Fetha Nagast* itself: in this, private property was formally recognized.[3] Turning to the latest age we find that a clause (article 27) of the constitution of 1931 runs as follows: 'Except in cases of public utility determined by law, no-one shall be entitled to deprive an Ethiopian subject of the movable or landed property which he holds.' Between these dates stretches the long struggle of the crown to counter these rights and to retain control over the lands granted out on various terms to the several categories of subjects.

[1] Tellez, p. 53.
[2] Lobo, J., *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (translated by Mr. Le Grand), 1735, p. 263.
[3] Guidi, p. 361. Quoted by M. de Coppet in Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 611.

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THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

According to one legend, when Menelik I returned from his visit to his father Solomon, he divided the land into three parts, one for the crown, one for the church and the other for the laity. Certainly, as regards the first part of the division, the Emperors retained vast estates as the royal domain. These tended to be most numerous in the region of the imperial headquarters and became less so towards the periphery of the country. We saw in the chapter upon public finance that the estates from which it was possible to supply the royal household with grain, honey, *tef*, etc., were known as *mad-bet*. These estates included also wide pastoral areas which carried the royal herds. There were numerous large estates scattered about the country which the Emperor had granted to members of his own family and so long as these remained closely bound to him they were, politically, as useful as his personal domain.

From his royal domains the Emperor took all the produce that could be delivered to him. With the conquest of the southern lands and the arrival of the railway he was able to grow and to sell coffee. Outside his domains, in spite of his frequent claims, the Emperor was only able to make effective claim to waste, lapsed, conquered, and confiscated lands. Sometimes individuals or groups, holding private heritable land, would ask the Emperor to take it over as royal land in order to protect themselves from the rapacity of some local lord or the claims of some other group. In Dembea the people did this because the Emperor was allotting so much of their land to the churches against their will and they felt that if it was royal land he would not be so generous with it.[1] An unsuccessful rebellion would give an excellent opportunity for him to regain some of his lost land by means of confiscation. What he resumed with one hand he was always giving away with the other into what was in fact, if not in theory, private ownership. He still retained over this, of course, his rights to taxation. This consisted, as we have seen, in the tithe, a tenth of the produce, which was generally confined to grain, and to a land-tax which varied in amount and character from time to time and from place to place. He also reserved the right to make special levies.

Within the vast terminology referring to Ethiopian land tenure there are two terms which must be defined and kept before the reader. The one is *rest*, which means hereditary ownership, and the other is *gult* which describes land in which the Emperor had granted away some or all of his rights to tribute. (There is a conflict of authorities as to whether the Emperor had ever granted away his tithe as well as his tax upon *gult* land.) Clearly either of these kinds of tenure was very desirable;

[1] Rossini, pp. 104–5.

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423 when combined they represented the most coveted of all tenures as well as the one most weakening to the imperial authority.

From the different kinds of grant made to the various classes, the governors, the churches, the soldiers and others, for various purposes, arose the many categories of land tenure.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE LAND

635 The position of the provincial governor was relatively simple. He
651 collected the whole of the Emperor's tribute within the province (in so
661 far as this had not already been granted away by a process which will
423 be examined presently), and he used it for the support of his administration, which meant of himself, his deputies, judges, messengers, and above all, the soldiery. As we have seen in the chapter upon public finance, it is impossible to generalize upon the proportion of tribute which the governor sent on to his Emperor except that it varied with the distribution of power at any given time between the two of them, and in the north might range from the refusal by a distant and almost autonomous governor to send anything but perhaps a token payment to the large tributes in kind and in money which are described by observers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is frequently stated in the European accounts of Ethiopia that the office of governor, like all other offices, was sold by the Emperor and by this method, injurious as it was, he would be sure of at least some return. He would also have an interest in frequent changes of office; the governor's interest would consequently be in extorting all he could from his province as rapidly as possible. 'They are generally more like robbers than governors', was the conclusion of one witness.[1] 'The governors purchase their Commissions, or to speak properly their privilege of pillaging the Provinces" concludes another.[2] 'You are governor of Ras el Feel', the Emperor's secretary announced to Bruce. 'I hope you will never see it. It is a hot, unwholesome country, full of Mahometans, but its gold is as good as any Christian gold whatever.'[3]

That these exactions continued into Haile Selassié's day was shown by the measures he took in his endeavours to reform the provincial administration. These exactions would certainly be less in the northern provinces where the governor was dealing with an ancient society, that of his own people, in which all relationships and tributes were sanctified by long established custom.

The governor would parcel out the tribute he controlled amongst his many lieutenants in the districts and amongst his own and the Emperor's

[1] Tellez, p. 53. [2] Lobo, *op. cit.*, p. 263. [3] Bruce, vol. 3, p. 365.

1 [not proCessed - Analyst]

THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

soldiers. He would also have, like the Emperor, official estates set aside for the upkeep of his large household and it would be these he would be most anxious to retain if he lost his governorship. For these estates he could call up the labour of soldiers and *gabars*.[1] Parkyns recorded in the mid-nineteenth century that for his estates the governor could exact one day's work for clearing, one for sowing, two for cleaning, and two for harvesting, and this was still the custom in this century.[2] Instead of cultivating his estates directly by using labour in this way, the governor might lease his land to tenants who would pay him a stated proportion of the crop as rent. According to one authority in the north, governors claimed that one tenth of all privately owned land should also be cultivated for him and he would himself choose the lands. Where, as in Tigré, the governorship tended to remain for a period in the same family this was not so grave an injury to the province, but if a governor from outside were sent in the people might not dare to demand back the lands from the local family and were obliged to set aside new lands for their new governor.[3] Besides the governor's estates there would be others attached to the various offices of his assistants.

In addition to their more regular dues from the people it was customary for governors and their assistants to demand special gifts from time to time, such as a sheep from each village at Easter and at the festival of the true cross.

THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY

The Emperors were always extremely generous to the church, even if they had not gone so far as to allocate that third of the original legend which the famous cleric Takla Haimanot claimed in 1270. Every priest, monk, *debtera*, and deacon, in so far as he was excused from the work of the fields, required that land furnished with slaves or *gabars* should be set aside for his support. A vast total of land was burdened with this service. The piety of Emperors warred here with their political interests—at one moment they were moved to give, at another to resume their gifts. But it was not easy to assert the royal claim against monasteries which were undying corporations or against churches which needed permanent endowment and were, moreover, served by priests determined to pass on their lands with their offices to their sons. Moreover, the very character of the grants protected them. Their most

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–91.
[2] Parkyns, M., *Life in Abyssinia*, 1853, vol. 2, p. 230. Also Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[3] Rossini, pp. 107–8.

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794 423 ●651 frequent form was that of *samonanya*, lands given to support the service of the mass. The Emperors had granted much *gult* to the churches and thus gave them the power to keep all the royal tribute from it and even to administer justice and to retain its proceeds. Even where this grant had not been made as *rest-gult* it was not easy to regain control of it and the convention was that, when such land was taken back by the Emperor, an equivalent estate should be granted.[1]

It should be remembered that land was not held collectively by the church but, as in England, by the individual 'parish' churches or monasteries or by the Abuna and the *Ichegé*, who between them held very large estates, and by other ecclesiastics.

701 423 Military service, regarded in this chapter from the aspect of land tenure, was a universal obligation upon land unless the land was held by the church and specially exempted. The obligation was on the land rather than on the person, so that if a woman held a piece of land which had to supply soldiers it was her duty to raise and equip them. There were many different kinds of military tenure because each type of service was attached to special pieces of land and called by different names which need not be listed here. There was, for example, land which supplied the following services—the fusilier, the artilleryman, the muleteer, the porter transporting baggage, the bearer of the red tent or the Emperor's tent poles, the makers of gunpowder, the quartermaster, the forager, and many other military needs. It was even specially laid down for each piece of land whether its soldiers should fight in the centre or the left or right wings of the army.[2]

Estates would have to give the service of soldiers in varying numbers from the single man to a thousand or more. Those who owed these large numbers were, of course, very important people, and in Shoa at least it was probable that the man liable for a thousand would be a holder of *gult* over a considerable area.[3] Parcels of land might be allotted to 'regular' soldiers to support them while on service, or given as a reward for service, generally with a continuing obligation to provide a soldier of some special type.

It will be seen that there was no uniform system for the raising or support of the soldiers, especially as these were serving different masters. Thus in one province there might be part of the Emperor's army as well as the governor's provincial army, while both the latter and his district governors would have their personal bodyguards. Though in the north the serving soldiers were generally supported out of the tithes, they might be quartered directly upon the people or given lands of their

[1] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, pp. 611–13. [2] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.
[3] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 612; also de Castro, pp. 281 ff.

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own. The soldier was generally freed from all taxes except the tithe and this might be excused where he provided his own horse and weapons.

Not only was there great variety in the arrangements but they were by no means static even in the conservative north. An example of this may be given from Gojjam. Here under Ras Hailu and his father, the *Negus* Tekla Haimanot, the soldiers were simply local men who, being exempted from tithes and other dues to the government, cultivated their own land and did three months' service a year at the governor's headquarters. After Ras Hailu's rebellion and his deposition in 1932 on grounds of misrule, Ras Imru, the Emperor's kinsman, was sent in his place. Although he was said to be a much more enlightened governor, the people murmured because he brought with him his 'foreign' Shoan army which oppressed the *gabars* who had to support it. This is an example of how, in the face of the complexities of the social situation, an ostensibly reforming measure might be frustrated.

PRIVATE TENURE

The main forces by which land and tribute were held by what may be called the public elements of the national life of Ethiopia, the Emperor, the church, the governor and his assistants, and the soldiers, have been very briefly indicated. The picture, even in this outline form, would not be complete without some reference to tenure by private persons, especially by those small farmers and peasant cultivators by whose work the rest were nourished.

The position of the *gabar* has been defined in relation to the rest of the community. When, in the northern provinces, we examine this class in their own right we find that it presented the most enduring strands in the texture of Ethiopian society and that its composition leads us back to the tribal past.

Over large parts of the northern provinces, especially those that were not too seriously disturbed or overlaid by Galla invasions, the land was held by groups of peasant holders, generally under the leadership of one or more families, and any inquiries about their origin would lead almost at once to romantic personal stories that may date, or appear to date, from some centuries before. These stories would explain how that group had come to be where it was and how its forefathers had first occupied the land.

These groups held by *rest*, that is, by hereditary right. They held as a group which had preserved some of the close ties of an original kinship group even though in the course of time it had absorbed many

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down the resistance of the undisturbed customary societies in favour of his own centralized control. Thus in Wallo, an ancient Galla region, the people had been organized into seven districts under the rule of seven of the original families. When Menelik first wrested its allegiance from John he had to conciliate these local leaders, but later, when he became stronger, he weakened them and had the land measured and more evenly distributed. In 1916 when the *Negus* Mikael was defeated after an attempt to rebel, Wallo was parcelled out under generals, and soldiers were put in by the central government.

MEASUREMENT AND INHERITANCE

Before concluding this general account some answer must be given to the questions as to whether there was any survey and registration and what were the rules of inheritance?

There was, of course, no survey as the term is understood in England. There was a measurement, a *gasha*, which was the equivalent of 80 to 100 acres, and in some parts of the country and notably, as we shall see, in parts of the conquered south the land had been measured. In Ethiopian terms, 'the cord had been thrown', sometimes once and sometimes a second time, with more accuracy, after the land had been cleared and farmed. Measurement of the land gave the Emperor and his officers greater control over it and its resources and the prime mover in this process had been Menelik.

In the north, measurement has been by no means universal. In Gojjam, most stubborn and independent of provinces, and in Bagemdir there was no general measurement of land. In other northern provinces it appears that when estates were granted in recent times by the Emperor, especially those in *rest-gult* tenure, they were measured and registered. Small estates and the lands held by groups of *restenyas*, divided and at times redivided, were distinguished by natural landmarks and registered in men's minds or they might be entered into parish registers. The new land-tax of 1944 was based upon the unit of the *gasha*, but it is very doubtful whether measurement had been sufficiently carried through by this date to make it possible to execute the law upon this basis.

With regard to inheritance, we have seen that this was only held to be permissible for *rest* land though in fact it was far more widely applied. It was not permissible to leave land away from the family or the group, or equally to give or sell it, without the permission of those chiefly interested. In leaving land the owner could allocate as much as two thirds to his favourite child—and in some parts this could be a daughter—while the rest was divided equally between the other children.

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THREE LOCAL EXAMPLES OF TENURE

423 634 Three local examples will illustrate tenure. The first is from Gojjam under Ras Hailu.[1] The province was divided into fourteen districts. Most of these were in turn divided into two or three sub-districts. In each of the fourteen districts was a district governor (*abagaz*), who generally bore the title of *dejazmach*, and an assistant or deputy (*Mislané*). These men, appointed solely at the governor's will, were in general charge of the administration and jurisdiction of the district. Beside them functioned the *gulta gaji*, who was always a local man whose title was hereditary in certain families. He oversaw the collection of taxes, settled small cases between the *gabars*, and acted as liaison between the government and the people. He appointed as assistants a *chiqa-shum* for each village-group, an office which was held for a year and rotated among heads of families.

●651 The list of the tributes paid to the various officials is very indefinite as to the amount and is of value only as indicating very generally the complexity of the system rather than the exact weight of the burden carried by the peasantry or the proportions taken by the different officers. Taxes and payments were divided as follows between the various authorities.

Government	Tithe in grain.
	Tax of $2 on each pair of oxen.
	afarsata fines.[2]
	Tax of $1 on each hut.
Abagaz (district governor)	Court Fees.
	Labour dues.
	Dues for use by men and cattle of warm mineral springs.
Mislané (deputy)	*Irbo* (a proportion of the government tax paid in kind).
	A proportion of the court fees paid to the *abagaz*.
	Labour dues.
Gulta gaji (hereditary chief)	A proportion of the grain crop of his district.
Chiqa-shum (village head)	His reward was exemption from taxation during year of office.[3]

[1] From information obtained locally by F. de Halpert. [2] See p. 149.

[3] It may be of some slight help in interpreting the money payments to note that the penal code of 1930 equates a quarter of a dollar with one day's work of an unskilled labourer. (Clause 6.)

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THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

The taxation in Gojjam was probably lighter than elsewhere, since, as has just been explained, soldiers were paid here by means of exemption from taxation.

In a study of the system round Lake Tana, mainly in Bagemdir, an Italian writer notes how, side by side with the groups of *restenyas* tracing their hereditary occupation to the first settlements, probably in the fifteenth century, other tenures had grown up. One was that of the *farasenya*[1] to whom the Emperor had made grants of certain privileges and payments amounting generally to about a tenth of the produce of the *restenya* and also the right to exact labour for his land and house and collective gifts upon important feast days. Similar rights, but not including administrative powers, were given to *gultenyas* who, while collecting all the dues owed to the government, had to pay to it an agreed quota of oxen, mules, honey, etc. Thirdly there were the grants of *maskal mariet* (lands of the cross) to the church. In all these cases the rights were often given over the heads of the *restenyas*, who would continue to cultivate their lands as before. As there might be superimposition of new rights over old at the top, there might also be added lower stages by the leasing of land by *restenyas* and others to tenants who would have to pay rent as well as tax.

Side by side with these holders of what may be regarded as private rights would be the hierarchy of the governor. The private rights might cut like islands into the administrative area of his district governors or these might be the *gultenyas* or *farasenyas* themselves and so eliminate the dualism. The *chiqa-shum* who collected the tax would thus pay it either to the *Mislané*, the *gultenya*, the *farasenya* or the *alaqa* (head) of the church. The writer condemns the cumbrousness of this method, with its encouragement of peculation and exactions. The original tax of the people was one tenth of their crop, but the feudal organization had resulted in a multiplication of intermediaries whose great object was to pass on less than a tenth to the government and to exact more than a tenth from the people, enriching themselves on the margin of differences. Those who suffered most were some of the *gabars* who had to support both the church and the *farasenyas*.

An Italian writing of Ethiopian abuses and Italian reforms in 1937 is not likely to underrate the vices of the old system, but there is plenty of comparative evidence, as well as the laws of probability, to suggest that he has not greatly darkened his picture. He states that under the Italian Government, after the conquest, the upper part of the structure[2]

[1] Literally 'horseman' and corresponding, apparently, to the early English 'knight'.

[2] Grottanelli, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 14–15, 105–12.

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had been removed, leaving the heads of villages and districts in direct contact with the Italian resident.

Our third example comes from Eritrea. No excuse is needed for this excursion beyond the present borders of Ethiopia, since the Eritrean plateau was until fifty years ago a part, and one of the oldest parts, of the Ethiopian state, and this region may again revert to its former status. In addition, however, we have the great advantage that Dr. Nadel, an anthropologist of experience and authority, has had the opportunity in this region under the British military administration to make a thorough investigation of a land tenure closely resembling that of northern Ethiopia.[1]

On the Eritrean plateau the most characteristic unit was the *enda*, a number of families which claimed to have descended from a single ancestor. This group was not static; it might decline or be dispersed, or it might thrive and reach a size when it became necessary to break up and form new *endas*. It was not an administrative unit, but in certain matters it acted as a unity through meetings of its elders. The administrative unit, the village, generally covered several *endas*, though these may have all descended from a parent *enda*. The village unit might also cut across *endas*.

Above the village administrations, in the days before the Italian conquest, came the hierarchy of the Emperor, his governors and deputy governors. These were often strangers from the south though local chiefs might be promoted to imperial positions. The imperial taxation had to be delivered to these officers, and the Emperor might arbitrarily cut out estates in *gult* for their support, or for that of monasteries or colonies of soldiers posted in these outlying regions to support the Emperor's power.

These rights may be regarded as extraneous to the underlying customary tenures which are divided by Dr. Nadel into three, ownership by the individual (which generally meant the individual family); by the kindred, or *enda*, and by the village. The first two types of ownership might, owing to the blurring of the edges between the three groups by growth or decline, shade off into each other.

In his discussion of family ownership Dr. Nadel gives us an authoritative definition of *restl*, which may cover ownership ranging from that of an individual to that of a large kinship group. This tenure was held by the people to be the most fundamental and sacred, and its characteristics were firstly its relative absoluteness; secondly its hereditary nature,

[1] Nadel, S. F., 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', *Africa*, vol. 16, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 1–22, 99–109. The succeeding pages are closely based on this concise report.

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times brought dissension to the state, the legitimate Crown was triumphant most of the time. 175*

In the history of Ethiopian literature the period has been called a Golden Age.[1] The important works composed during this time include *The Glory of Kings*, which contains the story of the Queen of Sheba, Solomon, and their offspring, Menelik I, legendary first king of Ethiopia; *The Book of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth*, a compilation of occult theology and numerology, with a Miltonic account of the struggle between Michael and Satan; *The Christian Romance of Alexander the Great*, a fantastic portrayal of Alexander as a Christian hero who traverses the Land of Darkness and the miraculous Land of the Living; the moralizing tracts of the greatest emperor of the period, Zar'a Yā'qob; as well as numerous lives of saints and translations of Christian writings from Arabic. 175* 538

Connoisseurs of Ethiopian art attribute the most original and refined paintings to the latter part of this period. Using translucent colors and austere shapes and design, Ethiopian monks brought to expression an intense spirituality in the form of miniatures in illuminated manuscripts.[2] 175* 532

At the same time this was the Heroic Age of Ethiopian warfare. Amda Ṣeyon vanquished sixteen Muslim chiefs to the south and west; the valor of Sayfa Ar'ed was celebrated in medieval Arab tales of chivalry; Dāwit I pushed his victories against the Muslims as far as Zeila on the Gulf of Aden. Improved military equipment and organization under Yeshāq brought the imperial forces to a new level of discipline and power, which Yeshāq used to establish his authority in many southern areas. Zar'a Yā'qob, famous for endowing churches and monasteries and for encouraging literature and art, was a successful warrior in his own right. 175* 648

A close-up of Ethiopia at the height of its medieval synthesis is provided by Father Francisco Alvares, Portuguese emissary to Abyssinia during the years 1520–27.[3] We see a prosperous kingdom, its far-flung dominions headed by hereditary rulers and royal appointees, all of whom pay tribute in kind to the emperor. The tribute consists of horses and mules, blankets and cloths, silk stuffs and gold, all in impressive amounts. The provincial heads, and the armies they must make available, live off the land they govern. The numerous priests and monks are supported by lands granted them by the king. Justice is administered at three levels, with the possibility of appeal from the local judge, to the provincial governor, to the royal court itself. The king's mobile camp, large as a town, is his capital, so that he spends his years marching about from one corner of his domain to another. 175* 64 631 [651] [69]

The monarch at the time of Alvares' visit was Lebna Dengel (1508–40), a man of pride and temper. He refused to heed counsel that the kingdom was imperiled by threats from the outside. Indeed, legend has it that he was discontented with the prevailing civil harmony and begged God to send an ad- 175* 643

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paid increased attention in recent years. A new phase of public health endeavor in this decade was marked by the imposition of a nationwide health tax in 1960.

Health has become a prime objective in Ethiopia's modernization program because of a growing realization that the wide prevalence of malaria, tuberculosis, typhus, intestinal parasites, syphilis, trachoma, leprosy, and other diseases continues to sap the vitality of the nation's productive forces and to visit misery on countless peasant families. The public health forces in Ethiopia (Ministry of Public Health, WHO mission, and AID Public Health Division) have long understood that Ethiopia's health needs cannot be met by piecemeal therapy. They have undertaken a program of preventive measures by preparing public health teams in the medical college at Gondar. The college trains health officers, community nurses, and sanitarians within a common framework, so that when they go into the field they will understand each other's tasks from the start. The first public health center employing such a team was opened in the late fifties; Ethiopia's Second Five-Year Plan envisions one such center for every fifty thousand people by 1967.

The objective of these public health workers is to transmit a number of instructions—concerning personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, early care for illness, and isolation of contagious diseases—which are at variance with customary beliefs and practices. Experience with comparable programs elsewhere suggests that the success of such health teams is by no means assured.[18] What are the forces working for and against the acceptance of these new instructions by the Amhara peasantry? Both negative and positive factors may be identified with respect to each of the three general categories previously referred to: the general outlook regarding change; attitudes toward the agents of change; and degree of compatibility between the new cultural items and the old.

The Amhara peasant's general resistance to change may be presumed operative here as elsewhere, particularly since health practices are often associated with religious beliefs and sentiments. Defense of indigenous therapies has in fact become a significant channel for the expression of traditionalist sentiment, a channel that has even been utilized on occasion in the Addis Ababa newspapers.[19] And a general posture of resistance to changes in the field of health is supported by the interests of traditional practitioners, *dabtarā* and *tanquāy*, who are in danger of losing clientele if modern-trained health workers come to win their allegiance.

Counter to this conservative drag, on the other hand, is the peasant's powerful desire for one basic change in his life circumstances, namely, the reduction of morbidity and mortality. Despite his idyllic conception of paradise and his frequent contention that life on earth is something of little value, the Amhara wants to avoid death. Even from the religious point of view he is

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necessary, to die on the battlefield, as did Galāwdēwos, Yohānnes IV, and others. He had to maintain a minimum of political order, balancing off contending ambitions and subduing rebellious elements. Another important function was that of ultimate arbiter in judicial disputes.* As guardian of the church, moreover, he was active in endowing monasteries and churches and in resolving doctrinal disputes among the clergy.

To carry out these and related functions the emperor needed great wealth and political power. When the monarchy was intact he could command wealth from many sources: from the country-wide land tax (*gǐber*), in the form of honey, grain, or livestock, or such special fiscal assignments as saddles, plowshares, spears, ink, or tent pegs;* from assessed tithes on produce; in tribute from subject peoples, either in currency (gold, salt bars, etc.) or in kind; in revenues from traders; and from gifts from new appointees and hopeful office seekers. In theory, moreover, all the land of the empire belonged to its ruler; and, in fact, a good part of it was at his direct disposal, either for cultivation as royal estates or to distribute as compensation to those who served him.

The political power of the emperor was grounded in his command of troops supported by the royal bounty. In addition, he could command the troops of all the lords subject to his authority. Through frequent tours around the country he was able to reassert his hegemony from time to time in distant regions. But even from afar, a strong monarch could usually exert great control thanks to his authority to appoint or demote at a moment's notice any officer of the realm. As Alvares observed:

> No great lord of lands, if he is in them, can leave them, or set out for the Court on any account without being summoned by the [emperor]; and being summoned he will not fail to come for any reason. And when he sets out from the land of which he is the lord, he does not leave either wife or children or any property there, because he goes away in the expectation of never returning, since . . . [the emperor] gives when he pleases, and takes away when he pleases.[10]

The ideology of sacred monarchy served to legitimate theoretically boundless demands for wealth and power as well as to provide identity and morale for the body politic. It justified, too, occasional "deviant" behavior on the part of the monarch, virtually the only person with sufficient authority to innovate in this intensely conservative culture. The emperor has always been a primary agent of cultural innovation in Abyssinia, from the time of Ēzānā, who adopted Christianity in the fourth century; to Zar'a Yā'qob in the fifteenth

* To this day Haile Selassie devotes several hours a week to hearing court appeals in a session known as *chelot*.

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who cultivated them being required to hand over a certain proportion of their produce every year.*

A man's "bigness," however, depended more on political authority than possession of land. It was often true in Abyssinia, as in feudal France, that the most powerful lords actually possessed relatively few estates. So long as they were not out of favor, the nobility typically were given appointments as provincial and regional governors in return for their loyalty and services.

The responsibilities of governors at all levels were diffuse. As with the emperor, combined in their persons were administrative, judicial, and ceremonial, as well as military, functions. They were obliged to collect the land tax and tithes of their subjects and transmit the proper amount to the king. They communicated imperial proclamations, announced by beating the *nagārit*, a large drum which symbolized the legitimacy of their authority. They had to judge cases of litigation that originated in their court or were appealed from lower levels. They were expected to keep disturbances caused by bandits in their area down to a reasonable minimum. They had to preside informally on the occasion of religious festivals and to provide large feasts for their followers, and occasionally for the beggars and indigents of the area.

The fact that political position was granted as a reward for military activity, like so many acres of land—or to the highest bidder, as Almeida complained[29]—suggests that the benefits of office outweighed its obligations. Indeed, public authority in Ethiopia was frankly regarded as a private possession by all concerned. The incumbent might change, but the office remained—not so much a set of obligations to fulfill in behalf of the king, or the state, let alone in behalf of the subjects—but a set of opportunities for personal aggrandizement.

The opportunities, both psychic and economic, were impressive. One was expected to avail himself of all the obsequious gestures which serve to swell the ego of an Abyssinian ruler. If so inclined, the governor could indulge his sadism ad libitum; sword, lash, and rope were, besides the *nagārit* and seal, the official insignia of a provincial ruler. He could order the peasants in his area to labor for him—to plow his lands or build his houses—as well as command them to military service. He could exact tribute from them without relief, in addition to appropriating for his family and retainers part of the

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*Each land unit worked by a given tenant farmer, or *gabbār*, would be divided according to that proportion, in order to equalize the differences resulting from variation in such factors as the size of land units or the quality of soil. The proportion paid to the landlord varied with the location of the land; thus, one-half might be exacted for ordinary *dēgā* (high) land, while in certain *qolā* (low) areas only a tenth might be required, owing to the difficulties of heat, jungle, and wild beasts.

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565 63 661 taxes collected in the name of the emperor. Concerning the imposts for which the peasants were liable, Plowden wrote in 1844:

[651] They pay a certain portion in kind to the Ras, or other great chief, and sometimes a regular tax in money; besides this, they must furnish oxen to plough the king's lands. Their immediate governor then takes his share in kind of every grain (say a fifth), and feeds besides a certain number of soldiers at the expense of each householder: he has rights to oxen, sheep, goats, butter, honey, and every other requisite for subsistence; he must be received with joy and feasting by his subjects whenever he visits them, and can demand from them contributions on fifty pretexts—he is going on a campaign, or has just returned from one; he has lost a horse, or married a wife; his property has been consumed by fire, or he has lost his all in battle; or the sacred duty of a funeral banquet cannot be fulfilled without their aid.[80]

Two centuries earlier, observing similar phenomena, Almeida had concluded that "generally speaking, they are all plunderers rather than governors."[81] The only restraints on their exploitative behavior have been an occasionally keen sense of Christian propriety and the limits to what an exasperated local populace will bear.

565 The existence of a predatory class who serve military functions and maintain a gentry subculture is a common enough feature of traditional agrarian societies. What is perhaps less common in the Abyssinian case is the constellation of factors relating to the recruitment of members into this elite.

High secular status in Abyssinia was dependent on a complex of possessions—land, political strength, and honorific titles—which tended to reinforce [423] one another. The possession of much land has always been a basis for considerable deference in Abyssinia. As a source of produce, rents, and revenues [556] deflected from the Crown, moreover, it was also a source of wealth to be used [662] in building up one's political strength by rewarding able soldiers and loyal [661] followers, and by making gifts to one's superiors. Political power was directly obtained through the acquisition of governorships. Such offices were a further [631] basis for much deference and, through the incumbent's access to tribute, customs fees, court fees, and gifts from his subjects, of much income as well. [594] Titles, finally, not only were universally esteemed but also entitled the bearers to a style of life which included a presumptive right to gifts and obedience from all inferiors as well as the consumption of much wealth and power.

565 643 For all these possessions, the Abyssinian noble was directly dependent on his king (or, in the case of a lesser noble, on his overlord). His dependence was twofold: land, political office, and titles came to him as gifts from the sovereign, and, what is more, their continued possession was contingent on [423] the sovereign's continuing favor. Abyssinian "vassals" had no legal rights to their "benefices," and lands granted them could be withdrawn and given to others as the emperor wished. At the death of a feudal beneficiary his lands

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with his numerous following. In the South it is the same and we heard that Dejasmatch Balcha . . . ruling thousands of square miles and no one knows how many subjects with a hand of iron, pays no taxes, no tribute, no share in the upkeep of government. It is common talk that he has been summoned to Addis Ababa upon more than one occasion and has sent back the reply: "If you want me, come down here into Sidamo and get me."[30]

The most that Rās Tafari could do to realize his political ambitions then was to work patiently within the existing structure, attempting whenever possible to fill the posts of provincial governors with men of his own.

After his coronation, Haile Selassie continued to be faced by considerable opposition from provincial lords. The governors of Tigre and Gojjam were particularly troublesome, and some nobles from those regions joined their lots to the Italian cause during the occupation. Not until the restoration was Haile Selassie able to effectuate policies which would strip the old nobility of their autonomy once and for all.

Three major innovations of the years after 1941 accomplished this end. One was the establishment of a standing military force under the Emperor's direct control that rendered the existence of separate regional armies unnecessary and possessed a capability clearly superior to that of any force a rebellious lord might muster. This included the national army, trained for a number of years by a British mission; and the Imperial Bodyguard, reestablished after the liberation on a new and expanded basis. These troops monopolized the modern weapons in the country and the limited air power, later developed into a separate air force. In a short time there appeared a new class of military officers, trained with modern techniques, and living as salaried employees of the government. The traditional function of the noble as military commander was thus made obsolete.

Second, under a governmental decree of 1942 a new fiscal system was set up under the Ministry of Finance. In this system the peasants have been obliged to pay a fixed quota of taxes in money, for which they are given a written receipt (*kärnē*). These taxes are collected by employees of the Ministry of Finance and transmitted directly to the provincial capitals or to Addis Ababa. This has been a popular reform among the peasantry, who are no longer required to submit arbitrary amounts of goods and labor to their district rulers. For the nobility, however, it means that their legitimate income is restricted to what they produce on their own lands, the rents they receive from their tenants, and—if they hold office—to what they receive from the government as a monthly salary; though in practice it continues to be supplemented, in many cases, by bribes and illegally imposed fees. Thus, they can no longer support a significant number of followers.

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"subject to the approval of the Emperor" and gave him "the right to promulgate the decrees, edicts, and public regulations of the Church, except those concerning monastic life and other spiritual administrations."

The general position of the church had already been weakened by the events of the Italian occupation. Italian policy resulted in the destruction of many church buildings and the massacre of numerous monks, including those of the hallowed monastery of Dabra Libānos. Of the national leaders, the Egyptian *abuna* was out of the country from 1937 on; two of the bishops were put to death, including the much venerated martyr, Abuna Pēṭros;* and the remaining two compounded the demoralization by openly supporting the invaders. One of these went so far as to anathematize resistance fighters and Agbade Ethiopian priests to give Christian burial to those who died as patriots. In some areas, moreover, it is said that the local clergy lost much prestige by welcoming the invader with open arms.

Haile Selassie thus had a much stronger hand in his dealings with the clergy when he returned from exile in 1941. The next year he issued a decree which sharply restricted the perquisites of the local clergy. Their landed properties were no longer tax free, but now carried the obligation to pay taxes at the normal rate into a central church treasury. The church was deprived of temporal jurisdiction over its ordained and lay members, including the authority to inflict fines, and was denied the right to corvée labor from peasants living on their lands. (In practice these latter restrictions of authority are frequently ignored in the provinces.)

The development of a nationwide system of government schools, finally, has broken the clergy's monopoly of educational facilities. Wherever government schools have invaded traditional Abyssinian regions, the clergy tend to be defensive and resentful. The specific issues have been the decreased prestige of certain traditional religious subjects, which are not taught in these schools, and the comparatively lower income of church teachers. Thus, a full-time teacher of reading attached to a monastery may receive Eth$15 a month from the central church treasury, whereas a government school teacher in the same area teaching the same subject may earn Eth$150 a month.

Despite all these blows, the clergy still retain much the same prestige as ever in the provinces. Their influence over public opinion is considerable, and has been a major factor in discouraging families in traditional Christian areas like Manz from sending their children to government schools.† Despite

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* A statue of Abuna Pēṭros has been raised in the center of Addis Ababa. His fate has been celebrated in the verse drama by Makonnen Endālkāchaw, *Ye-dam Dimṭ*, translated into English as *The Voice of Blood* by Endālkāchaw Makonnen.

† When the Ethiopian government is ready to inaugurate a major program of provincial education, it should not prove difficult to overcome this opposition. A number of provincial priests, with whom the author has discussed this matter, have signified their willingness to serve as

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Political and Military Organization (prior to 1942)

*121 571 The Amhara political system was based, as has been suggested, on an interlocking hierarchy of patron-client relationships. Given the tremendous importance of domination and deference in such relationships, the demands made upon an inferior by his superior seem virtually unlimited. Nevertheless, [642] the system as a whole was characterized by a high degree of decentralization and laissez faire, and there were safeguards for protecting the rights of individuals at all levels.

*121 • 651 641 The basic dimension of constraint concerned the imposition of taxes of various sorts. The original meaning of the verb "to rule" in Amharic (*nag-gasa*) is "to collect tribute"; and this was the primary activity of rulers at all levels. As we have seen, provincial rulers had to deliver an annual tribute to their overlords and the latter a tribute to the monarch; local rulers, in turn, obtained income from the labors of peasants and artisans, exacting both land taxes and tithes. Peasants working land which had been granted to a noble or church as *gult* were obliged to hand over the full produce of half their land to the landlords. In addition to paying these periodically collected taxes, the peasants were liable to have their stores confiscated when required to billet soldiers or subjected to raids by passing armies.

[466] The peasants were further required to furnish a certain amount of corvée labor each month to their rulers and landlords. This might be used for purely personal projects, like cultivating the lord's estates, or for quasi-public ones, *121 such as constructing a new church building. There was, finally, the obligation 641 for every adult male who was not a member of the clergy to take up arms [701] under his local lord whenever a levy was proclaimed. Those who did not 689 respond to such a call were subject to fines or other punishment as well as the [626] barbs of public opinion.

*121 The military organization of the Amhara was highly individualistic. Un-701 like the Galla, the Amhara did not provide for the collective training of their [702] warriors. Each man was left to learn how to fight by himself and to provide his own equipment. A man could become a "career" soldier when he came [714] of age simply by purchasing a shield; or he might prevail upon an established lord to arm him temporarily, with the promise of returning the equipment should he leave that lord's service. Similarly, there were no collective provisions for the supply of troops. Each man was left to fend for [705] himself, drawing upon the supply of grain he brought along and whatever booty he could acquire on the warpath; the preparation of his food was left to the wife or servant who accompanied him to battle.

*121 The conduct of a military operation exhibited a minimum of external 701 constraint and discipline. Chains of command existed with respect to the 726 general direction of troop movements, and the camping pattern was highly